

Summary Jury Trial Summit

SJT Advantages and Recommendations

The following comments were generated during a dialogue with Hon. Lucindo Suarez, Supreme Court Judge, Bronx County, New York, at the “2019 Summary Jury Trial Summit” convened at the Michigan Hall of Justice on October 31, 2019. Judge Suarez serves as New York State’s Summary Jury Trial Coordinator.

Summary Jury Trial (SJT) Advantages

1. Reduce time and money associated with protracted litigation
2. The expense of calling experts and doctors can be avoided
3. Incentive for giving up right to appeal: avoid costs of motions
4. May be a more cost-effective process than arbitration
5. Exposure can be capped by including a high/low provision in the stipulation to use SJT
6. Gives parties a better number than derived through case evaluation
7. More cost-effective than a traditional trial
8. Lawyers get to try cases
9. Jurors are pleased with serving for just one day
10. Get a “fair shake” from jury as opposed to what some consider to be biased arbitrators
11. Other mandatory ADR process (e.g., mediation, case evaluation) may be avoided
12. Gives people their “day in court”

Implementation Recommendations

1. Need strong judicial leadership
2. Pilot conducting SJTs in auto accident cases: there’s a defined policy with caps
3. Conduct a local “mini-summit” to introduce the process to the local bar
4. Market the SJT as a solution to a problem
5. Consider expediting SJT cases on the docket
6. Make a sitting judge available to avoid the cost of hiring a lawyer or retired judge
7. Make a courtroom available

Additional Information

More information about summary jury trials, including a video presentation of Judge Suarez’s remarks and forms, can be found here:

<https://courts.michigan.gov/Administration/admin/op/Pages/Summary-Jury-Trial.aspx>